

BATTLE OF WILLIAMSBURG.

THE BRIEF FIGHT ABOUT THE OLD CAPITAL CITY.

The Description is written as if by a War Correspondent Near the Field—Life At-ward—During the War in the Ancient Bur.

(Written for the Times.)

WILLIAMSBURG, May 5, 1862.—All is excitement in Williamsburg, General McClellan and his staff have just left the old city which has been guarded by them since the outbreak of the war. They with the remainder of General Magruder's command have received orders to fall back towards Richmond, giving place to the troops under the immediate direction of General Joseph E. Johnston. The booming of cannon and the incessant rattle of musketry, proclaim that the fighting of yesterday has been renewed below the town when the Confederate rear guard and the advance troops of McClellan had some skirmish fighting.

Southern regiments from above are now hurrying back to sustain those already in the field, who are hotly contesting the recovery of two redoubts abandoned yesterday by the Confederates, and occupied during the night by the Federals. To accomplish this much blood is vainly shed. McClellan is pressing forward with his full force. Johnston gives battle to check his advance and secure the safety of his retreating army and wagon trains. Women cheer and wave their handkerchiefs, in some instances dyed in Southern blood, as the soldiers from above pass through the town at a double quick.

THE REBEL YELL.

They respond with the "Rebel yell," hurrying on, many of them to return no more. The rain pours in torrents, the battle progresses, more troops are needed to keep back the Yankees. Now the wounded are being brought in to the shelter of the town. Every available place is open to them. Each is "somebody's darling," and all are treated in a common bond of brotherhood ready to do and to die in cause held dear and sacred.

All day the battle rages, night falls bringing a cessation of hostilities, and the town is filling fast with soldiers weary with the excitement of active engagement or with the strain of remaining under fire for hours unable to strike a blow while face to face with death. Every house is open now, fires throw out their warmth, chaldrons boil, tables are spread with such cheer as the times allow. Men too tired to eat, with garments saturated with water fall heavily upon the floors, sinking into the sleep that follows upon exhaustion.

ARMY FALLING BACK.

Midnight comes and the word passes from mouth to mouth, "the army is falling back." With the rising of the sun the soldiers of the gray have all left, not a soul is to be seen in the streets, nor a sign of life save through parades had stricken the city. Not so, however, for in the houses anxious hearts are beating in the bosoms of those who but a few hours before had been guarded from all evil by fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, lovers, now left alone to meet a hated foe with what resolution and tact they may command. A guard at the entrance of each house announces the approach of the Federal army.

MINGLING OF MUSIC.

First in line comes the artillery, as fresh to all appearance, with horses as richly caparisoned as though no battle had been fought but the day before. In one unbroken line of twenty-eight regiments, the infantry follows, bands of music play the Star Spangled Banner, John Brown's Body, Dixie, and Yankee Doodle. They pass up the Duke of Gloucester street, which at this time has echoed to the strains of Hymns, English, French, Continental troops, and left the noiseless foot-fall of the stealthy Indian. The cavalry possess themselves of the palace green covered with its golden shower of butter cups. Supply wagons camp upon the court-house green. Under one of the shade trees a blacksmith has set up a temporary bellowes, where he hones a horse, which, with every stroke of his hammer, he calls Abe Lincoln, that horse seems to have as many teeth as a centaur, so long and well got it. A band of indignant fops look on from behind closed blinds, upon the decoration, as they feel it to be of their beautiful old town. The sight of the great army, with all its war-like appliances in gallant array, pressing on the little band of badly clothed, badly fed patriots, who foot-sore and hungry, plow through mud and water, on to Richmond, depresses those who for the first time see the strength of the foe with whom the Southern army must contend.

MINISTERING ANGELS.

They nurse themselves, however, remembering that duty lies before them, for even now are not the hospitals and churches occupied by wounded soldiers who are alike prisoners of war, needing the ministering care and sympathy of woman? Soon are seen groups of two and three with basket in hand and faces closely veiled, hurrying to the Episcopal and other churches, where our reveal its horrors to those who here see death and wounds accompanied with the heroic fortitude of the true soldier. In the chance of the Episcopal church lay a magnificent form from which the spirit had fled. A wounded comrade with quivering lip said, "he is dead, madam." In the aisles are three or four of the unknown dead mingled with the wounded, suffering survivors of the battle.

Soon arrangements are made to take those we can be moved to private houses. From these asylums of comparative peace and tender care how many passed away to the presence of God. The Rev. Dr. Martin, of the Baptist Church, and Rev. Samuel Blair, of the Presbyterian, ministered in every way to the wants of the wounded and the dying. In the court-house a sadder scene yet meets the eye. Here are twenty-five dead, who are shortly buried in unheeded graves on the open ground. How typical is the old saying, "the body of Col. G. W. Ward, of the Second Florida. A bullet pierced his breast and he died on the field. A paper pinned on his coat gives his name and asks for decent interment. Captain Hayes, of the United States horse artillery, claims him as a West Point classmate and requests permission to assist at his funeral with a file of his soldiers, a proposal willingly accepted, as there are but few left to bury our dead. He was laid to rest in the peaceful church-yard of Bruton Parish, Rev. Mr. Ambler reading the service. Subsequently some one marked the grave with a white stone, which was the body of Captain Humphreys, of Alexandria. No coffin could be procured, and wrapped in his blanket, he rests his last sleep in an unmarked grave. Year by year children come with wreaths of flowers and lay them upon the soldier's grave.

But are there none in his native town—in the company he commanded—in the home he left desolate to do him honor? to place even the simple stone at his head with the sacred letters C. S. A., with the date of his death?

COLONEL WILLIAM PAYNE.

In the battle of Williamsburg, Colonel William Payne, of the Black-Horse Troop, was wounded, it was feared mortally, but the faithfulness of a comrade in holding the bleeding artery until assistance could be procured saved

his valuable life. To-day honored and beloved, he still lives for Virginia fighting for her political weal with the same boldness with which he then defied his soul from the ranks of his enemy. Here, too, was wounded Colonel Lewis Williams, a Virginia Infantry, left living, being disabled in what he said he had wished, for he fell in the charge of Pickett's Division at Gettysburg. Wounded and a prisoner, Captain E. Payson Reeve remained many weeks in Williamsburg. Still known in military circles and respected by all, he is at present conspicuous among those who will bequeath to him the name of Robert Lee.

James H. Dooley comes with him to-day the hero of that day's fight. His life has been spared to greater prosperity and usefulness. Many more there were who lived to be exchanged as prisoners of war and to return to the army, but most of the wounded passed forth maimed or crippled, or else sank into untimely graves, "unwept, unburred and unused," except by the few Confederate women who watched their parting breath.

TRAMP OF TROOPS.

For five days and nights the ears of the inhabitants were assailed by the constant tramp of troops, the clank of sabres, the neighing of horses, the rattling of wheels, as causes of disturbances wagons, artillery, cavalry and infantry possessed themselves of the devoted city.

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